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International Students in Their Own Country: Motivation of Vietnamese Graduate Students to Attend Vietnamese-German University

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Abstract for DBER Group Discussion on 2015-10-01

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Title:

International Students in Their Own Country: Motivation of Vietnamese Graduate Students to Attend Vietnamese-German University

Abstract:

Vietnamese German University (VGU), a new engineering and technology university near Ho Chi Minh City, is a collaborative effort between the German and Vietnamese governments. In this study, I highlight the motivation of Vietnamese graduate students for attending a foreign university, in essence becoming international students in their own country. Findings highlight the intersection between the global, national, and local levels of influence in transnational higher education.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN THEIR OWN COUNTRY: MOTIVATION OF VIETNAMESE GRADUATE STUDENTS TO ATTEND VIETNAMESE-GERMAN UNIVERSITY

Dr. Christina W. Yao
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DBERs STEM Education Seminar
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OVERVIEW OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN VIETNAM

- ▶ Changing economy has led to changes in educational structures
 - ▶ Teaching methods and curriculum are modernizing (Anh, 2009)
 - ▶ Moving from passive to interactive teaching and learning (Harman & Bich, 2010)
 - ▶ Need to produce better prepared graduates and advance in technology (Harman & Bich, 2010)



OVERVIEW OF VIETNAMESE-GERMAN UNIVERSITY

- ▶ Founded in 2008
- ▶ 750 students as of 2013
- ▶ 13 permanent faculty; 150 visiting faculty per year (“fly-in faculty”)
- ▶ Collaboration between the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) and the Hessen State Ministry of Higher Education, Research and the Arts (HMWK)
- ▶ VGU’s strategy is to “import excellent German study programs, taken from the strongest engineering areas of Germany and customize them to the needs of Vietnamese higher education.”



RESEARCH DESIGN

- ▶ 24 participants:
 - ▶ 9 women and 15 men
 - ▶ 18 first-year and 6 second-year masters students
- ▶ Semi-structured interviews in English
- ▶ Conceptual framework: push pull factors



FINDINGS: BENEFITS OF A GERMAN DEGREE

“You know in Vietnam, people highly appreciate who has a foreign degree. They like something relative to foreign nation than in Vietnam.” [Grace]

“I have a chance to learn with many professors around the world so it's better for me to get this experience...Because when I go to work in an international company I can manage many people from different countries, so it make me to learn not only the technical knowledge, but also the culture. The soft skill.” [Joshua]

FINDINGS: INSTRUCTION IN ENGLISH

“Because today we live in a world where many countries connect together in English unity. Without English we cannot do anything with foreigners. So we must study our program in English so that we can understand better and we all need to care about English.” [Matthew]

FINDINGS: LOW TUITION COST

“I’m when I’m find a university with lower student fees and teaching in English, I found only two universities. The first one it is in Hanoi, but they have higher cost and VGU has lower cost. And the other is from Thailand and I prefer Germany degree than the Thailand degree. I choose VGU.” [Cat]

“I also look at another university in Vietnam university in RMIT, but the price for RMIT is so expensive and some programs in my university, that’s some people said to me and I’m not confusing and don’t typical for this so I want to choose VGU.” [Tran]

IMPLICATIONS

- ▶ For transnational education:
 - ▶ Increased presence of foreign universities in Vietnam
 - ▶ Cost vs. value
 - ▶ Imposition of neo-colonial educational practices
- ▶ For future research:
 - ▶ Motivation of faculty for teaching at branch campuses
 - ▶ Teaching practices of Western-trained faculty
 - ▶ Perception of post graduates' job preparation
 - ▶ Gender roles in technology and engineering programs

QUESTIONS?

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